

Europäisches Patentamt
European Patent Office
Office européen des brevets



(11)

EP 0 716 319 A2

(12)

EUROPEAN PATENT APPLICATION

(43) Date of publication:
12.06.1996 Bulletin 1996/24

(51) Int. Cl.⁶: G01V 1/42

(21) Application number: 95118679.0

(22) Date of filing: 28.11.1995

(84) Designated Contracting States:
DK FR GB IE IT NL

(30) Priority: 05.12.1994 NO 944694

(71) Applicant: NORSK HYDRO a.s.
N-0240 Oslo (NO)

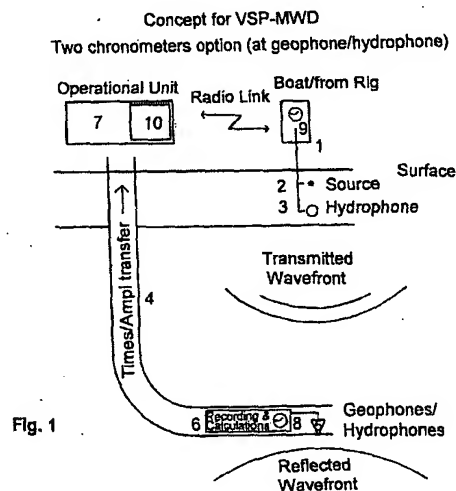
(72) Inventors:

- Petersen, Steen Agerlin
N-5006 Bergen (NO)
- Heggernes, Rune
N-5123 Sæbovagen (NO)

(74) Representative: Bleukx, Luc
Norsk Hydro Technology B.V.,
P.O. Box 2
4540 AA Sluiskil (NL)

(54) Method and equipment for performing measurements under drilling for oil and gas

(57) A method and equipment are described for performing measurements while drilling for oil or gas, in particular VSP-measurements employing a seismic source together with sensors such as hydrophones and/or geophones connected to a memory- and calculation device for storing and processing the seismic signals. The seismic source (2) is placed at or in the vicinity of the surface of the earth whereby signals generated by the source are detected by the hydrophones (3,5) or the geophones located in the vicinity of the source (2) at the surface and in the drill string (4). The geophones or the hydrophones (5) in the drill string transmit the detected signals to a memory- and calculation unit (6) in the drill string that processes and transmits the signals completely or partly to a central data processing unit (10) on the rig (7). The hydrophones or the geophones (3) at the surface simultaneously transmit the detected signals to the central data processing unit at the surface, while chronometers (8,9) showing identical times, connected to the source and to the memory- and calculation device in the drill string make possible a precise calculation of the travel time of the seismic signal between the source (2) and the geophones or the hydrophones in the drill string.



EP 0 716 319 A2

Description

The present invention relates to a method and equipment for performing measurements while drilling for oil and gas in formations beneath the earth surface, particularly VSP-measurements involving the use of a seismic source and sensors, together with a memory and calculation device for storing and processing the received seismic signals.

When extracting oil and gas from formations under-
neath the earth surface/sea bed, measurements are per-
formed in the wells that are drilled in order to obtain
information such as the position of the bit, oil/gas com-
position/quality, pressure, temperature and other geo-
physical and geological conditions.

Commonly, well measurements are performed in
four phases; when performing drilling operations, (MWD
- Measurements While Drilling), when logging after the
drilling operations have been completed during comple-
tion of the well and in the production phase.

MWD has primarily been introduced as an aid for
direction control when drilling (by position measure-
ments), but gradually this method has also replaced the
logging-phase.

Furthermore, MWD appears to be the only way of
collecting logging information in extended reach wells
and in horizontal wells. The application of the MWD
equipment has resulted in a reduction of the logging
costs and it has made it possible to take measurements
at locations not previously accessible.

Seismic measurements such as VSP (Vertical Seis-
mic Profiling) have commonly been performed in the log-
ging phase, but measurements of this type have also
been employed in the completion phase and the produc-
tion phase of the wells.

For a long time, there has been a demand for per-
forming VSP-measurements in the drilling phase,
referred to as MWD-VSP, as it is assumed that this will
reduce costs, but equipment for performing such meas-
urements has not been available until now.

VSP-measurements are in particular employed to
determine the vertical travel time through the ground in
a frequency band that is characteristic for seismic
records acquired at the surface of the earth. By these
means, detailed measurements performed in the well
may be integrated with seismic measurements per-
formed at the surface of the earth. In VSP-measure-
ments, the source will be located close to the surface or
in the well, with corresponding sensors in the well or
close to the surface. Today, data from VSP-measure-
ments are collected by means of a source located close
to the sea surface, and with the recording system con-
nected to the logging cable. The geometry of the VSP-
measurements may further be used for recording
reflected signals that are weak, and that represent struc-
tural surface elements (stratigraphic borders/fault
planes) in the close (max. one km.) vicinity of the well
(primarily under, but also to the side of and above the
well). MWD-VSP is equivalent to a VSP logged in the

traditional manner, and may at the same time be used
as an aid for direction/position control when performing
the drilling operation.

There is a previously known method based upon
"passive" source MWD-VSP where the drill bit serves as
source, and where the recording equipment is placed
upon the sea bed.

This method is somewhat dated, and today it still
represents the sole method developed for industrial
applications. The method was marketed as a successor
to traditional VSP on its introduction (1988), but it has
proved to be encumbered with so many substantial lim-
itations that few data have been collected under opera-
tional conditions that characterise drilling in the North
Sea. The companies that invented the method point out
that the most essential condition for generating signals
that are sufficiently strong, is to use drill bits of the "roller
cone" type. Thus, the method is not considered to be of
current interest for use in conjunction with other types of
drill bits, and therefore most of the delineation and pro-
duction wells in the North Sea cannot be served by this
method. The signal transmitted and the time of first
arrival are often partly degraded to a relative accuracy
of 5 msec and to an absolute accuracy of approximately
10 msec. These uncertainties are not acceptable when
performing measurements in delineation and production
wells. The examples given by the contractors relating to
the use of the reflected signals, have not been consid-
ered as usable, and the details in the reflected signals
that are critical in a drilling operation and in the inter-
pretation of the surface seismic after the drilling operation
has been completed are at a level substantially below
the noise level present in the records.

The disadvantages that characterise the passive
source mentioned above, may be avoided by making the
source strong and controllable. Among other things,
there have been suggestions to apply sources driven by
the circulating drilling mud, and tests of the use of a
telemetry pulser as a source have been performed. Fur-
ther, tests have been performed employing special
sources that are stronger than the telemetry pulser.
Meanwhile, it is uncertain whether such a source will be
harmful to the well and whether the energy level in the
mud will be sufficient for driving more powerful sources
while still meeting the demand for the energy needed in
the drilling operation.

The present invention provides a method and a
design of equipment for performing seismic measure-
ments (MWD-VSP measurements) during drilling opera-
tions, where the above-mentioned disadvantages are
completely or at least substantially eliminated. Thus, a
solution is hereby proposed that offers the possibility of
performing measurements in extended wells and hori-
zontal wells, and of utilising the VSP-measurements in
an active manner as a direction control device during
drilling operations. These two applications, and the fact
that logging after the drilling operation has been com-
pleted is now redundant, will lead to substantial cost
reductions when drilling for oil or gas.

Furthermore, an extended use of the calculation unit in the drill string will lead to an optimal utilisation of the communication possibilities between the drill string and the rig.

According to the invention, the method is characterised in that the seismic source is placed at the surface of the earth, or in the close vicinity thereof, and that the signals generated are detected by the hydrophones or geophones that are located close to the source at the surface and in the drill string. Further, the geophones or hydrophones in the drill string deliver the detected signals to a memory- and calculation unit in the drill string that processes the signals and transmits them completely or partly to a central data processing unit at the surface, and simultaneously, the hydrophones or geophones at the surface transmit the detected signals to the central data-processing unit at the surface, while chronometers that show identical times are connected to the source and to the memory- and calculation unit in the drill string. The chronometers enable a precise calculation of the travel time for the seismic signals between the source and the geophones or the hydrophones in the drill string.

In the following, the invention is described in detail with reference to drawings that illustrate an embodiment thereof, where Fig. 1 shows the principles of the method and the equipment according to the invention, while Fig. 2 shows an example of signals as they will be registered in the implementation of the method.

The use of the method and the equipment is based upon the application of a seismic source 2 located at or in the vicinity of the surface of the earth, the source being controllable from a rig or a ship 1. The use further implies one or more sensors such as a hydrophone 3 or the like, located close to the source 2 and controllable from the rig 7. Sensors such as geophones (or hydrophones) 5 together with a memory- and calculation unit 6 are embedded in the drill string. The programs used in the memory- and calculation unit are designed to process the signals that are received by electrical cables from the seismic sensors 5 or other registration units or sondes for the measurement of temperature, pressure, or the like.

In the memory- and calculation unit 6 in the drill string, all data registered during the drilling operation are stored. Only the data that are needed immediately, e. g. acoustical data to determine the position of the drill head, will be transmitted through the drill string 4 to a central data processing unit on the rig 7 at the surface. Signals received from the sensors 3 near the source 2 will simultaneously be transmitted from the rig/ship 1 by radio/telemetry to the central data processing unit 10 on the drilling platform. All the other signals that are recorded in the memory- and calculation unit 6 in the drill string, and that are of no immediate interest, will be transmitted to the central unit as the drill string is withdrawn.

Elements of great importance in the equipment according to the present invention are the use of chronometers 8 and 9 in connection with the memory- and

calculation unit 6 in the drill string 4 and the central data processing unit on the rig 7. These chronometers show identical times with a deviation of ± 1 millisecond or less. When using such chronometers in connection with the equipment as described above, the following will be achieved:

1. Two-way measurements of the travel time (TWT) and measurements of the acoustic impedance for the stratum in which the drill string with its sensors 5 is located, and immediate transmission of the signals.

2. The memory unit 6 that contains traditional VSP-data, may be emptied at each withdrawal of the drill string, and processing the data for localisation of reflecting planes may be rapidly performed after the drilling operation has been terminated.

Seismic measurements during the drilling operation according to the invention will be performed as follows:

The circulation of the drilling fluid is interrupted as the sensors 5 in the drill string are activated for the registration of sound signals discharged from the seismic source 2.

In the following 60-120 seconds (according to Fig. 2) the memory- and calculation unit 6 will acquire all signals from the sensors in the drill string. Fig. 2 shows signals registered by a sensor after the discharge of four shots from the seismic source. The signals contain both the transmitted and the reflected waveforms. The sources must be discharged within a fixed interval of time. After this time interval, the content of the memory unit are copied to the calculation unit and are processed to determine the number of shots, the mean arrival time, and the mean amplitude of the first arrived signals. This information may be returned to the surface while the drilling fluid is put into circulation again.

Claims

1. A method for performing measurements while drilling for oil or gas, in particular VSP-measurements employing a seismic source together with sensors such as hydrophones and/or geophones connected to a memory- and calculation device for storage and processing of the seismic signals, characterized in that the seismic source (2) is located at or in the vicinity of the surface of the earth and that signals generated by this source are detected by the hydrophones (3, 5) or the geophones that are placed in the vicinity of the source (2) at the surface and in the drill string (4), where the geophones or the hydrophones (5) in the drill string transmit the detected signals to a memory- and calculation device (6) in the drill string that processes the signals and transmits them completely or partly to a central data processing unit (10) at the surface (7), as the hydrophones or the geo-

phones (3) at the surface simultaneously transmit the detected signals to the source at the surface, while chronometers (8,9) showing identical times, connected to the source and to the memory- and calculation device in the drill string make possible a precise calculation of the travel time of the seismic signal between the source (2) and the geophones or the hydrophones in the drill string.

2. Equipment for performing measurements while drilling for oil or gas, in particular VSP-measurements employing a seismic source together with sensors such as hydrophones and/or geophones connected to a memory- and calculation device for storage and processing of the seismic signals, characterized in that the seismic source (2) is located at or in the vicinity of the surface of the earth and that the signals generated by this source are detected by the hydrophones (3,5) or the geophones placed in the vicinity of the source at the surface and in the drill string (4), where the geophones or the hydrophones (5) in the drill string transmit the detected signals to a memory- and calculation unit (6) placed in the drill string that process the signals and transmits them completely or partly to a central data processing unit (10) on the rig (7), as the hydrophones or the geophones (3) at the surface simultaneously transmit the detected signals to the central data processing unit at the surface, while chronometers (8,9) showing identical times, connected to the source and to the memory- and calculation device in the drill string make possible a precise calculation of the travel time of the seismic signal between the source (2) and the geophones or the hydrophones in the drill string.

40

45

50

55

Concept for VSP-MWD
Two chronometers option (at geophone/hydrophone)

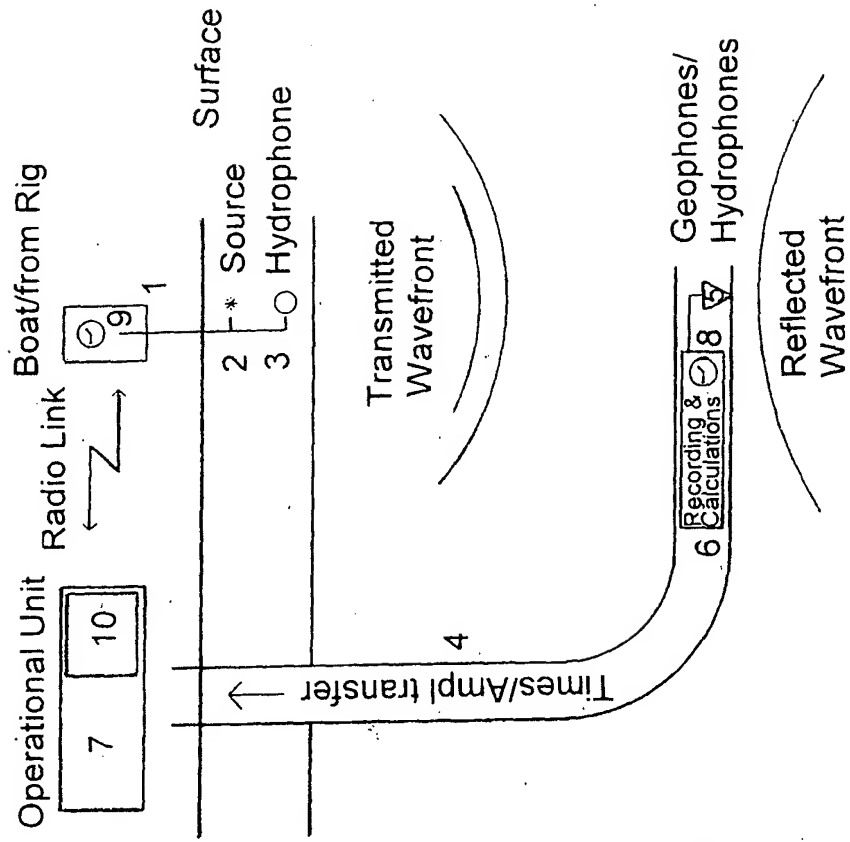
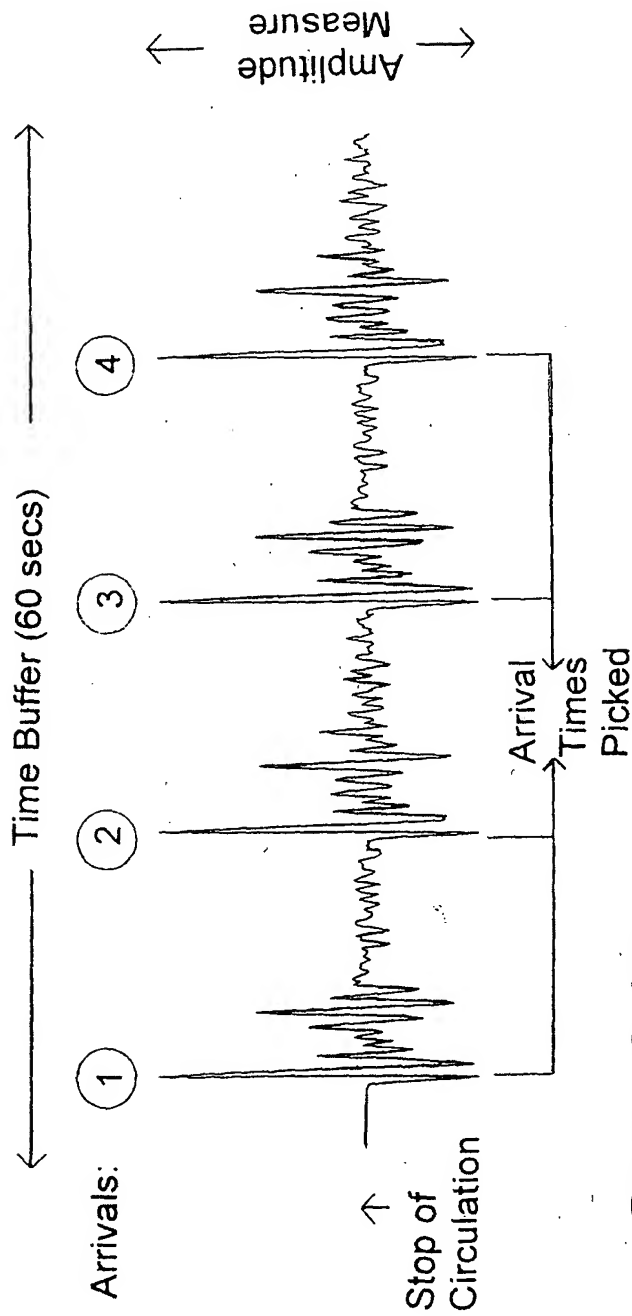


Fig. 1



Return to Surface:

Number of Arrivals

Average Amplitude

Average First Arrival Times

Fig. 2

Downhole Processing of Seismic Signals